

Remarks Following a Meeting With President John Evans Atta Mills of Ghana in Accra, Ghana

July 11, 2009

President Obama. Hello, everybody.

President Mills. We, indeed, consider as well as an honor and a privilege to have with us President Barack Obama. We're happy that this is the first country that he's visiting as U.S. President, and we like the positive signals that this visit is sending and will continue to send.

We want to congratulate you on the choice of Ghana and want to tell you that this encourages us also to sustain the gains that we have made in our democratic processes. And many Ghanaians, indeed, I can say without any fear of contradiction that all Ghanaians want to see you. I wish it was possible for me to send you to every home in Ghana. [*Laughter*]

But, once again, welcome to your own home, and we hope that this relationship is going to go from strength to strength, and that this monumental visit of yours is going to be all to the benefit of our respective people and to Accra, Ghana.

President Obama. Well, it is a great pleasure to be here in Ghana, and we are grateful for the extraordinary hospitality that's been shown to myself and my family and my entire staff during our visit here. I'll have the opportunity to address Parliament and have more extensive remarks, as well as upon departure, I will have the opportunity to address the Ghanaian people more widely.

Let me just say that we wanted to make sure to come to an African country after the G-8 and after my visit to Moscow to emphasize that Africa is not separate from world affairs. There's a tendency, I think, for U.S. Presidents to take a week sometime during their term and there's a separate visit to Africa, and we wanted to send a message that we have a continuing interest in Africa's security, in Africa's economy, in Africa's social and political development, because we live in an interrelated world and what happens here has an impact everywhere.

And coming to Ghana specifically, partly, was prompted by the fact that I'm very familiar with East Africa and I've been to South Africa, but I have never been to a West African country, and partly, it was to recognize the extraordinary progress that has been made in Ghana around democratic issues.

We had—President Mills is an example of a democratic leader who did it the right way and continues to do it the right way, but it goes beyond one individual. There are a set of institutions here that are sustaining democracy and openness and participation. You have an economy that has been well managed.

Obviously, this is a difficult time throughout the world economically, and Ghana is no exception; it's been impacted by the world recession. But there's been a greater level of transparency and openness. The growth strategy here in Ghana have been ones that are actually delivering improved standards of living for the people.

So we think that Ghana can be an extraordinary model for success throughout the continent, and we are very much looking forward to strengthening what is already a strong friendship between the United States and Ghana for many years to come.

So thank you, again, for your hospitality. We are very grateful.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:11 a.m. in the Presidential Palace. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Ghana, President Mills.

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